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SUBJECT: YOUNG KURDS WARN OF IMMINENT PROTESTS IN KALAR

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REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶11. (C) SUMMARY. Students and recent graduates from Kalar concurred that demonstrations would likely ignite there, but they disagreed on when those demonstrations might occur or how violent they would be. One student was adamant about protesting on April 14 - the commemoration of the Anfal attacks on Kalar - while two graduates said they believed PUK security forces would prevent demonstrations on that day. Our contacts explained that the people of Kalar were angry at the KRG about the lack of public services and the poor conditions in the city. As a result, Kalar residents have planned to prohibit government officials from entering the city for the commemoration of the 18th anniversary of the Anfal attacks. Activists also plan to attack the \$15,000 Anfal monument in Rizgari. Teachers in Kalar have encouraged students to form committees to press the KRG on political, economic, and social demands. END SUMMARY.

Demonstrations Likely; Date and Intensity Uncertain

¶12. (C) On April 8, Deputy Regional Coordinator and IPA met with two students and three recent graduates from the Germiyan area (southern region of Al Sulaymaniyah province). All of our contacts concurred that demonstrations in Kalar would likely launch at some point, but they disagreed on when those demonstrations might occur or how violent they would be. One student, who lost over 50 family members during Anfal, appeared especially angry with the KRG, saying he would demonstrate on 14 April - the commemoration of the Anfal attacks on Kalar - regardless of the consequences. When we asked where he would flee if the security forces responded forcefully, he said, "I will not flee, even if they kill me." That same student also mentioned he had a friend in Rizgari who said he wanted to die on April 14.

¶13. (C) Two of the graduates, however, had a more nuanced perspective regarding demonstrations on April 14, saying that the people of Kalar in the end probably would not demonstrate that day. They opined that the PUK's beefed up security measures and the public awareness of PUK's harsh response toward the Halabjah protestors would discourage demonstrators.

Conditions Ripe For Protesting

¶14. (C) The students and graduates explained that the people of Kalar were angry at the KRG because of the lack of public

services and poor conditions. They said the Rizgari sub-district of Kalar was a hot spot because that area suffered the most from the former regime's Anfal operations in the Germiyan region. They described Rizgari as similar to Halabjah.

Kalar students demonstrated late last summer and attacked several PUK-affiliated buildings.

¶15. (C) Our interlocutors observed that the KRG and the people of Germiya were disconnected. Following Operation Iraqi Freedom the people had rising social, economic, and political expectations. The conditions in the Germiyan region are archaic, they noted, adding that the area looked as if it were in "the sixteenth century, without paved roads or city services." The graduate from Kifri said that his city lacked potable water, electricity, and many other basic services.

Protestors Plan to Attack, Security Poised to Respond

¶16. (C) The students told us that Kalar residents had plans to prohibit government officials from entering the city for the commemoration of the 18th anniversary of the Anfal attacks on April 14. Our contacts added that the residents also planned to attack the \$15,000 Anfal monument in Rizgari (NOTE. Similar to Halabjah, Rizgari has a monument dedicated to the victims of the 1988 Anfal attacks in that area.) They added that the protestors' goal was not to destroy the monument, but to send a message to the KRG that the people were angry. Our contacts said that the PUK security forces were protecting the Rizgari monument 24/7 since the violent Halabjah demonstrations on March ¶16. They asserted that the teachers and students probably would have to initiate the demonstrations; but if they did, unlike Halabjah, the villagers, farmers, and other residents also would join in.

¶17. (C) The students and graduates were confident the security forces would try to prohibit demonstrating of any kind in Kalar on April 14 and probably would respond severely to protestors.

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One graduate claimed that when Kalar residents recently approached the PUK head in Kalar - Awad Shaykh Janad - to discuss their demands, he warned that if they demonstrated he would "break their legs."

¶18. (C) When asked where the people of Kalar would seek refuge in case of an Asayish roundup, our contacts said that several Iranian Kurdish villages near the Sirwan River had been a refuge to Kalar residents in the past.

Teachers and Students Pressing Demands

¶19. (C) Our interlocutors explained that in the last few months teachers in Kalar, representing the educated class, had organized students to form committees to press the KRG on political, economic, and social demands. The teachers, however, stayed behind the scenes and did not demonstrate, because if they did, they would lose their jobs. The teachers and students in Kalar later included other residents in meetings and formulated a list of KRG demands for Kalar.

¶110. (C) The demands included building a cultural center with a library and computer services, constructing schools, providing more qualified physicians, paving roads, and installing potable water. Our contacts said that the committee sent its demands to the KRG, but the KRG was unresponsive, other than providing land for Anfal victims to build homes. They said the people of Kalar were convinced the KRG did not respond to public demands and that its promises were hollow.

Corruption: Root Cause For Lack of Services

¶111. (C) Our contacts complained that administrative corruption was a key factor stymieing the fair implementation of projects

throughout the Germiyan region. They complained that the KRG lacked a fair and transparent mechanism to allocate projects, and, as a result, KRG leaders were able to favor some areas, while neglecting others.

¶12. (C) Our interlocutors said another problem was that the Germiyan region lacked a representative on the PUK politburo. For example, the KRG had implemented several projects in Hanakin, hometown of politburo member Mullah Bakhtiar, even though it was much smaller than Kalar. The KRG also implemented several projects, including a new large university, in Kou Senjaq - a city hit hard by the Anfal campaign and home of PUK leader Jalal Talabani. (NOTE: President Talabani was not born in Kou Senjaq, but lived there several years and considers it his home. END NOTE.)

¶13. (C) Our interlocutors complained that mayors and other local officials in the Germiyan area were unqualified political appointees. Kalar residents were angry that the PUK chief in Kalar was not a native. Our contacts complained that the PUK did not hold local elections, and residents were not allowed to become civil volunteers or initiate city projects. They claimed that local officials had neither experience in implementing city projects nor understanding the people's needs. Moreover, the local authorities did not have to abide by any laws and were empowered to implement projects, according to their mood.

¶14. (C) Our contacts accused the KRG of exaggerating the amount of money it had spent on city projects in order to pacify the uneducated people of Kalar. For example, KRG authorities quoted residents a much higher price to pave the two main roads in Kalar and, after paving only 100 meters, told the people that the funds had depleted. They said that the contracting companies were PUK-affiliated, and sometimes would leave projects half-finished to fulfill more lucrative contracts.

Party Connection Key to Obtaining a Professional Job

¶15. (C) Our contacts confirmed that people living in the KRG had to be party members or have a close contact in the party to get a professional job, or a post connected in any way to the KRG. Even government street cleaners were chosen politically. Our contacts said that shop owners did not need party membership to run a business, but they often faced problems getting a stall at a government market without it.

Comment

¶16. (C) We anticipate heightened tensions in the Kalar area on April 14. Kalar residents are angry with the KRG, and emotions tend to surface on Anfal and other anniversaries symbolizing Kurdish suffering. Teachers and students from Kalar will be

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home on break, ripening conditions further. The fact that Kalar students violently protested less than a year ago is noteworthy.

The main question remaining is how far Kalar residents will go in the face of PUK intimidation and threats.

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